



INSTRUCT-O-GRAM

THE HANDS-ON TRAINING GUIDE FOR THE FIRE INSTRUCTOR

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FIRE OFFICER 1 — PART 2

The fire officer has traditionally been promoted without much, if any, training or education on how to perform his or her new job. Experience has usually served as the training ground for making and implementing decisions at the emergency scene and in the station. This series of Instruct-O-Grams will give departments a plan to follow to give new and existing fire officers a chance to learn what the organization and the greater fire service expects of them before having to find out through either performance or, more likely, non-performance of an expected task or action. The IOG's will follow NFPA 1021, Professional Standard for Fire Officer.

This second IOG will cover behaviors expected from a company officer in non-emergency situations. The objectives are from NFPA 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.

Resources

- ◆ Bruegman, Randy R., et al., *On Guard, Making a Difference, The Fire Officer's Role*
- ◆ Brunicini, Alan, *Fire Command*, Fire Protection Publications
- ◆ Compton, Dennis, *When in Doubt, Lead*, Fire Protection Publications
- ◆ *Fire Department Company Officer*, 3rd Edition, IFSTA

- ◆ *Leadership: Strategies for Company Success*, National Fire Academy
- ◆ *Leadership: Strategies for Supervisory Success*, National Fire Academy
- ◆ *Leadership: Strategies for Personal Success*, National Fire Academy
- ◆ *Shaping the Future*, National Fire Academy

INTRODUCTION

Career or volunteer, the modern company officer spends the majority of his or her time someplace besides the fire scene. Because of this the company officer needs to have a wide array of skills to deal with the various situations and problems that may arise. Today's company officer needs to be a supervisor, a counselor, a problem solver and a friend. No one class can adequately prepare the firefighter to be a company officer. This lesson is designed to be used as a starting point on the road to becoming a company officer. Some students will have been fire officers for many years. Others may be still awaiting their first promotion. Each student has a unique and important perspective to bring to the class. The instructor needs to remember to afford each student the ability to discuss issues and ideas.

Students should be asked to bring a copy of their departments' policies and standard operating procedures.

Improper attitude includes a number of factors such as irresponsibility, laziness, disloyalty, fearfulness, uncooperativeness, jealousy, impatience, intolerance, absent-mindedness and excitability. Usually counseling or discipline can reduce accidents with this root cause.

Lack of knowledge or skill can usually be solved by training and practice.

Physical unsuitability can be due to a number of things. Some can be corrected and some cannot. If the cause is a physical disability that cannot be corrected, then those individuals should not be assigned tasks that put themselves and others at risk.

An accident investigation should focus on five things:

- ◆ Who was involved?
- ◆ What was involved?
- ◆ What were the circumstances?
- ◆ What was the root cause?
- ◆ Conclusions?

If the company officer keeps to this format the investigation can be both objective and useful to the department and its members.

The Instruct-O-Gram is the monthly training outline of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI). The monthly Instruct-O-Gram is provided as one of the benefits of membership in ISFSI.

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V. Emergency Service Delivery

A. Develop a Pre-Incident Plan

The fire scene is a busy, chaotic place. It is not well suited to making life and death decisions. Unfortunately many such decisions need to be made there on each call. A pre-plan allows many of those important decisions to be made in advance of the fire, leaving the Incident Commander the luxury of concentrating on the safety of crews, changing conditions and the incident priorities.

ACTIVITY

Break the class into manageable groups. Have each one sketch a pre-plan of the classroom building. If the building is large enough assign a portion of the building to each group. Have the groups present their pre-plans to the rest of the class. Discuss the pros and cons of the pre-plan formats chosen by each group.

VI. Safety

A. Apply Safety Regulations at the Unit Level

A large part of safety is attitude. That attitude must be set by the company officer. When all is said and done, the primary responsibility of the company officer is the safety of the crew, but the company officer is not alone in this responsibility. Several national standards apply to firefighter safety. Both the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have adopted standards that directly address

firefighter safety. NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program is the most extensive. NFPA 1500 directly references many of the other standards that apply to safety. The company officer needs to review these standards in order to set a positive example and enforce their provisions.

B. Conduct an Initial Accident Investigation

Many company officers and firefighters do not see accident investigation as their role. They see it as the beginning of a disciplinary action. However the investigation of accidents is a very important part of a company officer's job. There are a number of very good reasons to investigate accidents:

- ◆ Identify the behavior or condition that caused the accident
- ◆ Identify unrecognized hazards
- ◆ Identify training needs
- ◆ Identify the need for improvements in SOPs
- ◆ Identify the need for additional SOPs
- ◆ Identify needed improvements in safety procedures
- ◆ Identify facts that could have an impact in a legal case or lawsuit
- ◆ Identify the eligibility for pension or line of duty death benefit.

Many accidents are due to human factors. These accidents fall into three categories: improper attitude, lack of knowledge or skill, and physical unsuitability.

III. Administration

A. Implement a New Policy at the Company Level

Policies and procedures are how a department deals with recurring or predictable situations or problems. When a new department policy is adopted it is the responsibility of the company officer to implement it. Most policies are intended to be carried out at the company level. Sometimes these policies may be unpopular. The company officer needs to keep his or her feelings about the policy out of the discussion. The policy should be carried out as written. If the company officer believes that the policy needs to be changed that communication needs to go to those responsible for the policy. The concern should be accompanied with the reasons why you think the policy is wrong or will not work. Until it is changed it is your responsibility, as company officer, to see that it is followed.

B. Execute Routine Unit Level Administrative Functions

There are a number of routine functions that the company officer must perform. Ask the students to discuss what functions are normally the responsibility of the company officer in their department.

ACTIVITY

Using several simulated fire scene scenarios the students should complete a standard NFIRS incident report. Each student should complete a report for each scenario. Lead a discussion on the way the students completed the forms. Ensure that each student is given an opportunity to discuss his or her reports.

IV. Inspection and Investigation

A. Evaluate Information to Determine a Preliminary Cause of a Fire

The first step in a fire investigation is to find the point of origin of the fire. The best sources of information for this are the person who reported the fire and the initial crew who fought the fire. Lacking that information the company officer can use basic fire behavior knowledge to locate the seat of the fire. Some clues the company officer can use are: area of deepest charring, the bottom of the "V" and the area of greatest damage. These signs usually point to the area of origin. If an accelerant has been used there is a distinct pattern on the area where the accelerant has been used.

B. Secure an Incident Scene

Regardless of the fire, the scene must be secured until the cause has been adequately investigated. If the cause turns out to be criminal arson a defendant can be acquitted simply because the scene was left unsecured allowing people access to the area of origin. Additionally, any evidence collected must be secured. If the defendant can show that somewhere in the chain of possession of that evidence there was a breakdown of security he can win an acquittal. Fire departments usually have a legal right to custody of a scene until the investigation is completed. The company officer needs to know how to exercise that right in his or her jurisdiction.

Management by Objectives

Management by Objectives is based on the idea that workers, given the big picture and their place in it, would be motivated to perform at their peak. The problem for the company officer is that the department's goals and objectives may not always fit with the individuals. The firefighter must not only know the big picture but also believe that it is important. When the firefighter can not be persuaded to buy into the department's goals he or she will not be highly motivated to help achieve them.

Leadership Continuum

The Leadership Continuum holds that different people have different degrees of comfort in delegation, control and developing subordinates. The company officer who wishes to apply this theory must have a good grasp of both the crew's personalities and his or her own personality. Additionally, you must look at a given situation to see whether or not delegation, responsibility, control, etc. are needed.

E. Coordinate Completion of Assigned Tasks and Projects

Ask the students to discuss how they coordinate projects within their crews. Try to get them to think about some of the management theories presented and whether they use any or all of them, even if they did not realize they were doing it.

II. Community and Government Relations

A. Initiate Action to a Citizen's Concern

Citizen concerns are usually citizen complaints. These concerns are always real. Whether or not the concern is grounded, it is a real concern to the person bringing it to

you and they deserve a respectful response. The most important skill the company officer can have is the ability to listen attentively. The company officer is rarely the person who can solve or appropriately respond to the citizen's concern or complaint. Therefore, the officer must be able to determine the true nature of the concern, understand to whom the citizen can be referred, and actually refer the citizen to the person who can help. This requires an ability to listen and an understanding of local government structure.

B. Respond to Public Inquiry

Probably no one has a better plan to deal with public inquiries than Chief Brunisini of the Phoenix Fire Department.

1. Our essential mission and number one priority is to deliver the best possible service to our customers.
2. Always be nice – treat everyone with respect, kindness, patience and consideration.
3. Always attempt to execute a standard problem-solving outcome: quick/effective/skillful/safe/caring/managed.
4. Regard everyone as a customer.
5. Consider how you feel and what you are doing looks to others.
6. Don't disqualify others with your qualifications.
7. Basic organizational behavior must become customer-centered.

Lead a discussion on how public inquiries are handled in the students' fire departments. Ask for good and bad examples of how a department may have responded to an inquiry.

3. Unwillingness

Occasionally a firefighter may be able to perform a given task but simply be unwilling to perform it. The firefighter has the physical skills, understands what is to be done and knows how to do it but chooses not to perform as expected. This problem will require counseling and may require disciplinary action. Many problems may have their root cause outside of the fire department. It is the company officer's responsibility to assist a firefighter in identifying a personal problem and assisting him or her in getting outside professional assistance.

D. Apply Human Resource Policies

The fire department company officer needs to be aware of new human resource and management theories. Some of the more common theories of management are:

Scientific Management

Human Relations

Hygiene Theory

Management by Objectives

Leadership Continuum

None of these management theories is right in all situations. The company officer should study all new ideas to find the management theory which best suits his or her own personal style and that of the department. Some situations may also call for a particular management style. The company officer should keep in mind that these theories are best suited for non-emergency situations. Management in emergency situations was discussed in the previous lesson. The students should be encouraged to take further classes in management theory that will expand on these theories and present others.

Scientific Management

The Scientific Management Theory says that workers are mostly lazy and unmotivated. The only things that can motivate them are rewards such as pay and benefits. Adherents to this theory believe that workers require constant supervision. Because of these assumptions about workers, the assembly line was created. Each job was broken down into a series of simple tasks. While the theory is no longer in vogue because of the dehumanizing aspects on morale, the theory of breaking jobs into smaller tasks is still in use. You see its mark on the company organizations in fire departments today.

Human Relations

The Human Relations Theory holds that a happy worker is a productive worker. Research has shown that when workers feel that their supervisor is actually concerned about their happiness and well-being they respond with a greater effort and improved productivity. Company officers who are genuinely concerned about their crewmembers will generally see a motivated crew.

Hygiene Theory

The Hygiene Theory states that pay and benefits only motivate a worker for a short time. What truly motivates a worker is the satisfaction of doing an important job and performing it well. Company officers can use the Hygiene Theory every day. The work of a firefighter (paid or volunteer) IS important. Most firefighters do want to do it well. The company officer who can remind the crew of how important their job is and how well they do it will continue to have a motivated crew.

good for small groups who have a similar goal, such as a promotional exam or college courses. Mastery learning is based on seven principles:

- a. Mastery definition
- b. Small-step learning
- c. Simple-to-complex sequencing
- d. Reinforcement
- e. Formative evaluation
- f. Corrective activities
- g. Summative evaluation

3. Traditional Training

Traditional fire department training programs often focus on the number of hours spent training rather than on what is taught or how effective the class is. There are often requirements for a minimum amount of time spent in training for each member of the department. The company officer needs to be careful not to fall into the trap of doing training just to satisfy a requirement for a minimum number of hours. Just because you work in a system that focuses on the process rather than results does not mean that you need to provide inadequate or ineffective training. If you need to hold a class you might as well make it an effective and interesting one.

4. Prescriptive Training

Many departments have solved the problems of the traditional training approach by instituting prescriptive training programs. In a prescriptive training program the department has adopted measurable performance standards for each level. The training then focuses on helping the member to meet these standards. If the performance standards are well done the

training will be effective. The company officer just needs to adapt the performance standards into instructional objectives. A drawback to prescriptive training would be that only subjects covered in the department standards would be taught. The company officer needs to be open to new skills and knowledge that are not included in the department's standards and include them in the company training program.

C. Recommend Actions for a Member Related Problem

If a firefighter is not performing up to the department standard or up to past performance standards of the individual the company officer will be the first to know. If intervention on behalf of the firefighter is to be effective it needs to be initiated on the company level. The company officer needs to be able to identify and communicate any job related problems and help the firefighter identify the cause. Only then will a solution be effective. Problems with a job-based cause are usually from one of three causes:

1. Ignorance

Sometimes the firefighter may not understand what is expected or how to perform a given task. Once this problem is identified it is best addressed through training. The company officer must teach the firefighter what is expected and how to do it.

2. Inability

Sometimes the firefighter may simply lack the skills or ability to do the job. This may be a training problem or it may be a case of the wrong person assigned to a given task. If this is the case the company officer may need to reassign the job or may have to take it up himself.

Objectives

The fire officer will:

- ◆ Assign tasks and responsibilities at a non-emergency scene
- ◆ Direct companies at a training evolution
- ◆ Recommend actions for a member related problem
- ◆ Apply human resource policies
- ◆ Coordinate completion of assigned tasks and projects
- ◆ Initiate action to a citizen's concern
- ◆ Respond to a public inquiry
- ◆ Implement a new policy at the company level
- ◆ Execute routine unit level administrative functions
- ◆ Evaluate information to determine a preliminary cause of a fire
- ◆ Secure an incident scene
- ◆ Develop a pre-incident plan
- ◆ Apply safety regulations at the unit level
- ◆ Conduct an initial accident investigation

I. Station Activities

A. Assign Tasks and Responsibilities at a Non-Emergency Scene

As an icebreaker ask the students to discuss how they, as company officers, assign tasks and responsibilities. Many of the answers will be similar to the theories of management later in the lesson. The instructor should keep the students' discussions in mind and discuss them further, later in the lesson.

B. Direct Companies at a Training Evolution

There are several ways for a company officer to direct a crew during a training evolution. All of them are valid. The method chosen should fit department policy, the specific circumstances, the company officer and the crew.

1. Four Step Method of Instruction

The four-step method is a time-honored, traditional instructional method taught in fire service instructor classes. This method gives the best results for most people most of the time. It is an excellent guide for the inexperienced instructor. With many experienced instructors this method is ingrained, but it is always a good idea to revisit the method when preparing a class.

a. Preparation

Preparation includes researching the topic, researching your company's experience and level of expertise and preparing an outline or plan of instruction.

b. Presentation

Presentation is the way the class is given. This could be as varied as a formal lecture in a classroom to an informal demonstration on the tailboard of the apparatus.

c. Application

The application step is where the student gets to demonstrate that learning has occurred. The student gets to actually use the knowledge or skill as it was intended to be used.

d. Evaluation

Evaluation is where the instructor determines whether or not learning has taken place. The evaluation step could be something like a test or a student demonstration.

2. Mastery Learning

Mastery learning is also a time-honored instructional method. Mastery learning is an excellent method for teaching practical skills. It is well adapted for small group study. A group of three or four firefighters can learn a skill with or without a formal instructor. It is also